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What'd He Say?

Clarification needed.

President John F. Kennedy spoke some bemusing words to the nation's newspaper publishers recently when, while observing that the need for information was greater than ever, he cautioned the press to use restraint and employ a type of self-censorship.

Self-discipline rather than bureaucratic censorship is favored by the President in times of "clear and present danger," but just what Mr. Kennedy had in mind was not put across to his audience.

The President is evidently upset over the reactions in the press on several issues, including contradictory reports in the Pentagon, diplomatic leaks and such setbacks as the Cuban fiasco. Newsmen were stewing in their own inflated copy over the ill-fated invasion of the Cuban mainland and initial press reports were largely misleading, principally because communications with Cuba were cut and the only information available was the highly dubious claim of the rebel invaders.

But these invaders had the sanction of

the Government and the Administration, although coordination was something that simply didn't exist. One correspondent in Miami says that many of his colleagues went off the deep end but that they couldn't help but feel that somewhere along the line they were pushed.

On matters involving national security the press has always used its better judgment and although some papers and TV news shows go overboard now and then, the press is generally fair and responsible. President Kennedy sensibly puts the matter in the right hands and asks the fourth estate to tend its own environs, for he realizes that bureaucratic manipulation of information may save a face or two immediately but that in the long run needless restrictions will damage the people's access to their affairs and cover up mistakes that need exposure.